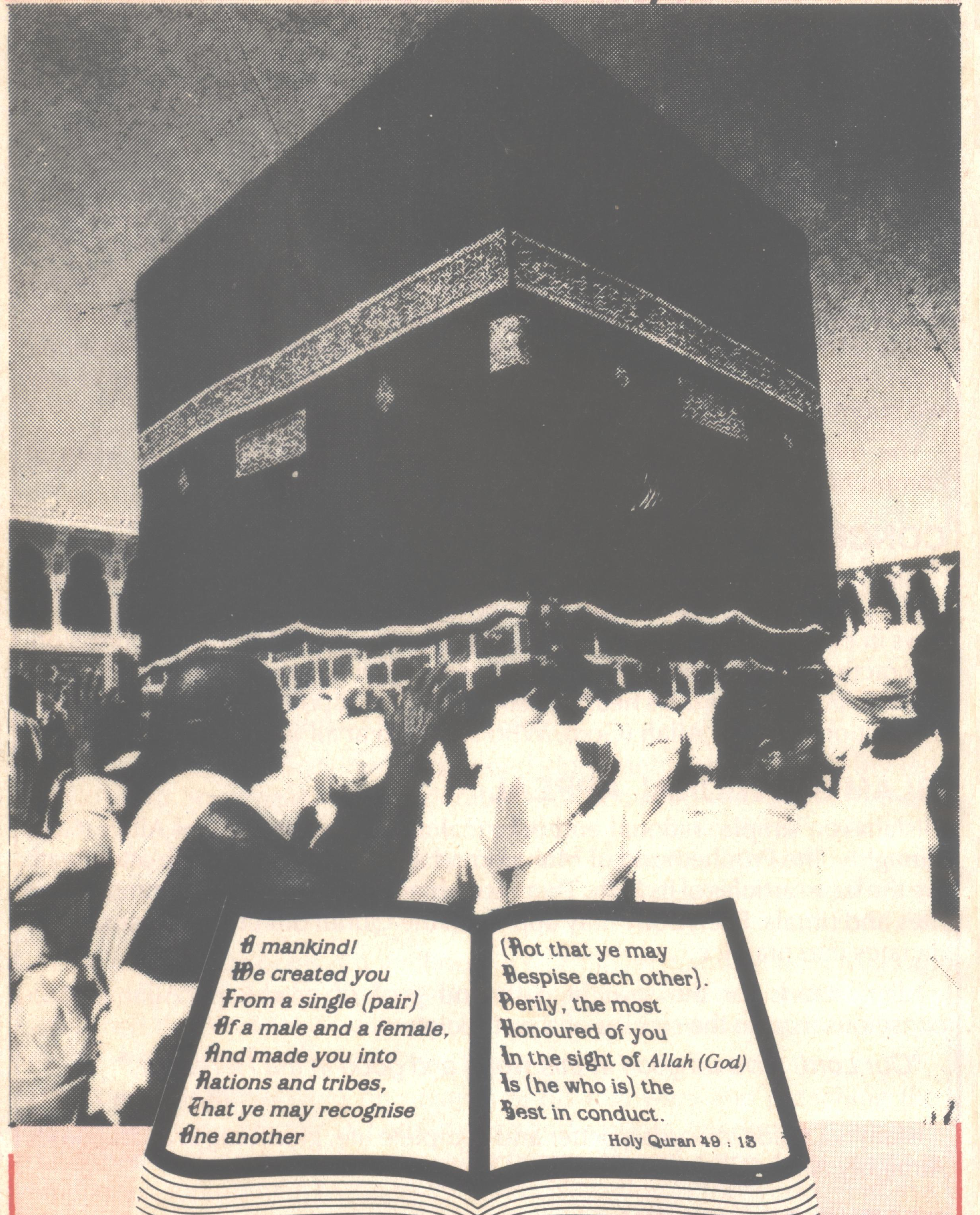
In the Name of Allah (God Almighty), Most Gracious, Most Merciful

ISLAM a way of life



ISLAM

Islam is a complete code of life. It tells man about the purpose of his creation and existence, his ultimate destiny, his place among other creatures and, more importantly, provides him with the guidance to lead a purposeful life to be rewarded in the life hereafter.

The Arabic word ISLAM means voluntary surrender to the will of Allah and obedience to His commands. Allah, also an Arabic word, is the proper name of God. Muslims prefer to use the name Allah rather than the word God. The Islamic way of life based on total obedience to Allah (God). This is the way to obtain peace here and hereafter; hence Islam also means peace.

Islam
a brief guide

MUSLIM

A person who freely and consciously accepts the Islamic way of life and practices it, is called a Muslim.

CONTINUITY OF MESSAGE

Islam is not a new religion. It is, in essence, the same message and guidance which Allah (God) revealed to all His Prophets.

'Say: We believe in Allah (God) that which was revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and to the Prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.' — ***(Quran 3.83)***

The message was revealed to Muhammad, the Last Prophet in Islam its comprehensive, complete and final form.

CONCEPT OF WORSHIP:

Islam does not teach or accept mere ritualism. It emphasises intention and action. To worship Allah (God) is to know Him and love Him, to act upon His laws in every aspect of life, to enjoin goodness and forbid evil and oppression, to practice charity and justice and to serve Him by serving mankind. Islam seeks to implant in man's heart the strongest conviction that his every thought and action are with Allah (God), Who sees him at all times and in all places.

ISLAM'S RATIONAL APPEAL

Islam is a simple, rational and practical religion. The unity of Allah (God) Almighty, the Prophethood of Muhammad and the concept of life after death are the basic articles of its faith. There is no hierarchy of priests, no complicated rites and rituals. Everybody may approach the Quran directly and translate its dictates into practice.

Islam stands for the straight path and goal of producing Allah (God)-conscious man in the service of a just society.

"Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter."

(Al-Quran 2:201).

Islam is a guide towards a better and complete life, glorifying in all its phases Almighty Allah (God), the Almighty Creator.

STATUS OF WOMEN

No discrimination is made on the basis of sex. But Islam makes one realise that the spheres of potential capabilities and hence responsibilities of men and women are equally important in themselves but not exactly the same. The role of men and women are complementary to each other.

BASIC BELIEFS

The three fundamental Islamic beliefs are:

Tawhid	(oneness of Allah)
Risalah	(prophethood)
Akhirah	(life after death)

TAWHID is the most important Islamic belief. It implies that everything on this earth originates from the one and only Creator who is also the Sustainer and the Source of Guidance. This belief Governs all aspects of human life.

Islam views human life as a compact and whole, and rejects any compartmentalisation. The Creator and Source of Guidance is one and the same, and therefore deserves worship and obedience from mankind. There is no scope for any partnership. Tawhid is pure monotheism. It tells man that Allah is neither born nor is anyone born of Him. He has no son or daughter. Human beings are His subjects. He is the supreme and ever active Lord of the Universe. He is Allah, the One.

Tawhid brings a total change in the life of a believer. This belief makes him bow down only to the One and only Creator who is ever watchful of all his actions on earth. He must work for the supremacy of his Creator in all areas of life and by doing so he achieves the purpose of his life - the pleasure of Allah.

RISALAH is the channel of communication between Allah and mankind. Allah, the Creator has not left man without guidance *(hidayah)* for the conduct of his life. Since the beginning of creation, He has sent down His guidance through selected people to convey to their fellow men. These chosen people are called prophets and messengers. The chain of *Risalah* began with Prophet Adam *(peace be upon him)*, included Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Jesus, and ended with Muhammad *(peace be upon them all)*. The message of all the prophets and messengers is one and the same. They all urged the people of their time to obey and worship Allah, alone and none other. It was necessary to send prophets at different times to bring back straying human beings from deviations, to the Right Course *(Siratul Mustaqim)*.

Our Merciful Creator has not only sent prophets and messengers to guide us; He has also sent down books of guidance with them. The Qur'an, which was revealed to Muhammad, *(Pbuh)* is the last of these books of guidance.

AKHIRAH means life after death. This belief has a far-reaching impact on the life of a believer. A believer is accountable to his Creator on the Day of Judgement. Belief in Akhirah implies that all our actions will be judged by Allah in the life hereafter. A person who obeys Allah throughout his life will be rewarded and will be assigned a permanent place of happiness in Paradise; the person judged to be an evil-doer will be punished and sent to Hell, a place of suffering.

One who believes in Akhirah is not expected to behave against the Will of Allah. He will always bear in mind that Allah is watching all his actions and the angels are recording them. Many present day problems in the world would disappear if everyone acted fully in accord with this belief.

FIVE BASIC DUTIES OF ISLAM

Islam has five basic duties called the pillars of Islam. Performed regularly and correctly with an awareness of their relevance to practical life, these duties bring a Muslim's life into line with the wishes of his Creator and Master. He then is able to fit himself neatly into the system of Islam which aims at the establishment of Truth and the eradication of untruth. In fact, the performance of these duties in the manner required can revolutionise the whole concept of living and give meaning and purpose to life.

1. ASH-SHAHADAH, the first of the five basic duties is to pronounce knowingly and voluntarily the first Kalimah, known as the declaration of faith:

La ilaha illal lah Muhammadur rasulullah
"There is no God except Allah, Muhammad is Allah's messenger."

2. SALAH (compulsory prayers) is offered five times a day in congregation or individually. It is the practical demonstration of faith. It has been designed to keep a believer in constant touch with his Creator, and make him conscious of his basic duty to work for the establishment of true order in society and to remove untruth, evil and the indecent. Salah induces in a person the qualities

of self discipline, steadfastness and obedience to the Truth. It makes him honest, truthful and courageous.

"O ye who believe! seek help with Patience, Perseverence and Prayer: for God Almighty is with those who patiently persevere."

(Al-Quran 2:153)

Five times a day, Salah provides a wonderful chance of making adjustments and corrections in life. It is both moral and physical training aimed at keeping a man truly obedient to his Creator.

The five daily prayers are:

FAJR	(dawn prayer)
ZUHR	(after mid-day prayer)
ASR	(late afternoon prayer)
MAGHRIB	(after sunset prayer)
ISHA	(night prayer)

Allah (God) Almighty does not need our prayers we cannot survive without His blessings and guidance.

3. ZAKAH (Welfare Contribution) is a compulsory (fard) payment from an adult Muslim for use by a fellow Muslims as directed by Allah (God) in the Holy Quran. Sharia (Islamic Law) has laid down a fixed minimum amount upon which Zakah becomes payable, called Nisab. It is important to note that Islam demands that a Muslim must first satisfy for himself the basic necessities of life necessary for survival. A person thus, who can satisfy his basic necessities of life and still has assets, cash, precious metals, (excluding diamonds for private use), over and above the needs for the basic necessities of life, equal or above Nisab, – must pay Zakaat.

It is neither a charity donation nor a tax. Charity is optional, and taxes can be used for any governmental purpose. But Zakah can only be spent on fixed headings like helping the poor and needy, the disabled, the oppressed and the lonely, to free captives and debtors and for other welfare purposes.

Zakah is an act of worship. It is one of the fundamental principles of Islamic economy, designed to develop an equitable society where everyone has a right to contribute and share. Zakah is paid with the consciousness that the wealth of a person actually belongs to Allah and the person owning it is merely a trustee of the wealth.

4. SAWM (fasting in Ramadaan) is the third basic duty that a Muslim is required to undertake to please his Creator. From dawn to sunset every day of the month of Ramadaan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, a Muslim refrains from eating, drinking, smoking and conjugal relations. It is a means of achieving self- control, designed to raise a person's moral and spiritual standards above selfishness, greed, laxity and other vices. Sawm is a yearly training programme to refresh a person's determination to fulfill his obligations towards Allah, his Creator and Sustainer.

5. HAJJ (pilgrimage to the house of Allah) is an annual event obligatory on those Muslims who can afford to undertake it, at least once in a lifetime. It is a journey to the House of Allah *(Al-Ka'bah)* in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. Hajj symbolises the unity of mankind and is the Annual Assembly of the Muslim community *(ummah)*. Hajj stands as the peak of the obligatory duties in that it lays bare to a Muslim that he belongs to none but his Creator. Hajj also demonstrates the equality of mankind.

THE QURAN

The Qur'an is the sacred book of the Muslims. It is the last book of guidance from Allah, sent down to Muhammad *(Pbuh)* through the angel, Jibrail *(Gabriel)*. Every word of it is the word of Allah. It was revealed over a period of 23 years in the Arabic language. It contains 114 Surahs (chapters) and 6236

verses. Muslims usually learn to read it and many memorise it by heart. They are expected to understand its meaning and practise its teachings.

The Qur'an is unrivalled in its recording and preservation. The astonishing fact about this book of Allah is that it has remained unchanged even to a dot over the past fourteen hundred years.

The Qur'an deals with man and the ultimate goal in life. Its teachings cover all areas of this life and the life after death. It contains principles, doctrines and directions for every sphere of human life. The success of human beings on this earth and in the life hereafter depends on obedience to the Quranic teachings.

THE SUNNAH

Sunnah is the practice of the prophet Muhammad *(Pbuh)*. It is contained in the Hadith, which is a collection of his sayings, actions and the actions done with his approvals. One needs to know Hadith in order to understand and interpret the Qur'an. Hadith has been meticulously recorded by the companions of the prophet since his death. Six collections of Hadith have become prominent and are regarded as the most authentic. They are: **Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Nasai and Ibn-i-Majah.**

MUHAMMAD *(PBUH)*

Muhammad *(peace be upon him)*, the last messenger of Allah, was born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia in the year 571 (Christian Era). His father, Abdullah, died before his birth and he lost his mother, Aminah, when he was only six. He married Khadijah, a noble lady of Makkah, when he was 25.

He received revelation from Allah at the age of 40 in 611 CE, and that marked the beginning of his work as Allah's messenger.

People of Makkah at that time worshipped idols. Muhammad *(Pbuh)* invited them to Islam. Some responded favourably and became Muslims, while others rebuked him and turned against him. Undaunted he continued to preach the message of Allah and gradually the number of his followers increased. He and his followers had to undergo terrible sufferings and face stiff opposition from the idolators.

In the twelfth year of his prophethood in 622 CE, he migrated from Makkah to Madinah. The people of Madinah accepted him as their leader and he established the first Islamic state there. The Islamic calendar begins from the day of the migration of the prophet.

Muhammad *(Pbuh)* went on organising his followers and preaching the message of Allah with unmatched patience and wisdom. Eventually Islam was established in the whole of the Arabian peninsula and it was set to make a tremendous contribution to the history and civilisation of the world. Within a short span of time, the message of Islam spread from Arabia to most parts of the world of that time. About 1 000 million Muslims of the present day world still bear testimoney to this message. **The ideology of Islam, completed at the time of Muhammad, is capable of solving present day human problems. Islam is the only hope for the present as well as for the future. The need is to practice it faithfully.**

WHAT BIBLE SAYS: *"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

(Bible – John 12, 13, 14)

Muhammad *(Pbuh)* according to the Qur'an, the 'blessing for the Universe'

and the 'perfect example to follow' died in 632 CE. He left behind him the Qur'an and his Sunnah as the sources of guidance for all generations.

RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS

These occasions are observed with due solemnity to seek the pleasure of Allah, the corner-stone of all Islamic activity. There is no concept of a festival for pleasure's own sake; but there are occassions of joy and happiness. The happiest occasion of a Muslim's life is to see the sovereignty of Allah established in its totality in His land. The two major occasions of joy and happiness in Islam are:

IDUL FITR is observed at the end of the month of Ramadaan. On this day after the month of fasting, Muslims express their joy and happiness by offering a congregational prayer preferably in an open field wherever possible. They express their gratitude to Allah for enabling them to observe fasting which is a training programme designed to prepare them to live as a practicing Muslim. Special dishes are prepared and it is customary to visit friends and relatives and to give presents to children to make the occassion lively and a special one for them.

IDUL ADHA begins on the 10th of Dhul Hijja and continues until the 12th day of the month. This celebration is observed to commemorate the sacrifice of Abraham when he was asked by Allah to sacrifice his own son, Ishmael. Abraham showed his readiness and Allah was well pleased. A lamb was sacrificed instead of Ishmael on Allah's command. Muslims offer congregational prayer on the day, and after the prayer they sacrifice animals like sheep, goats, cows, camels, to seek the pleasure of Allah. The meat of the sacrificed animal is eaten and shared among relatives, neighbours and the poor.

Some other occasions to remember include the beginning of **HIJRA** (migration of the prophet), **Lailatul Miraj** (Night of Ascension) and dates of Islamic battles fought by Muhammad *(Pbuh)*. There is a night of special significance in Ramadaan known as **Lailatul Qadr** (Night of Power). It occurs in one of the odd numbered nights of the last ten days of Ramadaan. The Qur'an mentions it as a night "better than a thousand months".

Islamic festivals are observed according to the Islamic Calender which is based on Lunar months. The Luner Year is shorter by about 10 days than the Solar Year. Festival dates are determined by the appearance of the Moon.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Marriage is the basis of family life in Islam. It is a solemn contract betweeen a bridegroom and a bride. Marriages are performed in a simple ceremony in the presence of the relatives, friends and neighbours.

Islam does not allow free mixing of grown up boys and girls; nor does it allow sex before marriage. Extra marital sex is severely punished. No discrimination is made on the basis of sex. Husband and wife are equal partners of the family and play their part in their respective fields. Divorce is permitted but is regarded as the most abominable of lawful acts.

DIET

There are some regulations regarding diet which must be observed by all Muslims. A Muslim is not allowed to eat the meat of:

dead animals (due to disease and natural cause)
animals slaughtered without invoking the name of Allah
animals strangled to death
pigs
carnivorous animals
animals devoured by wild beasts

and the blood of an animal.

Fish and vegetables are permitted. Islamic law requires an animal to be slaughtered by a sharp knife penetrating the inner part of the animal's neck to allow maximum drainage of blood. The invocation of the name of Allah is obligatory at the time of slaughter.

All varieties of alcoholic drinks such as beer and spirits are prohibited. These rules aim at rooting out the evil effects of food and drink on the health of people living in a society.

DRESS

A Muslim is required to cover his body properly and decently. No particular dress is recommended. Outlines for guidance include:

(i) For men, covering from navel to knees is a must.
(ii) For women, covering of the whole body except face and hands is compulsory. A women must not wear a dress which arouses man's base feelings, e.g. transparent, skin-tight, or half naked dress.
(iii) Pure silk and gold are not allowed for men.
(iv) Prohibition of women's clothes for men and vice versa
(v) Symbolic dress of other religions is not allowed.

Simplicity and modesty are encouraged. Dresses expressing arrogance are disliked. The style of dress depends on local custom and climatic conditions.

SOCIAL MANNERS

Islam teaches decency, humility and good manners. A Muslim greets another Muslim saying:

As-salaamu "Alaikum (peace be on you)
and it is reciprocated by:
Wa'alaikumus salaam - (peace be on you too)

Keeping one's promise, truthfulness, justice, fairplay, helping the poor and needy, respect for parents, teachers and elders, love for the children, good relations with one's neighbours are the most valued virtues of a Muslim.

Islam condemns enmity, back-biting, slander, blasphemy, ridicule, use of offensive names, suspicion and arrogance. Muslims must not adopt these bad habits.

POLITICS

In Islam there is no election but **Selection of the Righteous** taken as a whole, the Islamic state is a "welfare state" where **sovereignity belongs to Allah alone** and no human being has a right to govern other human beings except in the name of Allah and according to His Will, and where nobody, not even the Head of the State, is above law. Absolute Justice is the watchword and the Establishment of Righteousness is the goal.

Islam aims at the creation of a classless society by eliminating all possible social conflicts.

JIHAD

The word 'Jihad', which has been maligned much by the evil minded misrepresenters of Islam in connection with the wars of Islamic history, means "struggle" and, according to Islam, it is of two kinds:

(1) Struggle for subjugating one's lower self to the higher self. This is the higher form of *'Jihad'* and its function is purely spiritual;

(2) Struggle for defeating the forces of evil on the collective plane. This is the collective *Jihad*.

'What has happened to you? Why don't you fight in the way of Allah (God)

in support of men, women and children, whom finding helpless, they have repressed; and who pray, *'O God! liberate us from this habitation which is ruled by tyrants.'* — ***(Quran 4.75)***

Islam has come to liberate man from the worship of man and establish the worship of Allah (God).

ECONOMICS

In the sphere of economics, Islam envisages, through its laws and institutions, lays down the principle that wealth should not be allowed to circulate among the wealthy only.

POPULATION OF MUSLIMS

The world Muslim population is over **one billion** (1,000,000,000).

ISLAM - THE SOLUTION FOR MODERN PROBLEMS

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN:

A major problem which modern man faces is that of racism. The materially advanced nations can send man to the moon but they cannot stop man from hating and fighting his fellow man. Islam, over the last 1400 years, has shown in practice how racism can be ended. Every year during the Hajj, the Islamic miracle of real brotherhood of all races and nations can be seen in action.

THE FAMILY:

The family which is the basic unit of civilisation is disintegrating in all western countries. Islam's family system brings into a fine equilibrium the rights of man, wife, children and relatives. Islam nourishes human unselfishness, generosity and love in a well organised family system.

Human beings live according to their view of life. The tragedy of secular societies is that they fail to connect the different aspects of life. The secular and the religious, the scientific and the spiritual seem to be in conflict. Islam puts an end to this conflict and brings harmony to man's vision of life.

ISLAM YOUR BIRTHRIGHT

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"Every child is born a Muslim; it is his parents who make him a Jew, Christian or Magian (etc.)"

CONCLUSION

What is the state of the world today? Has man freed himself from all superstitions, imbecilities and absurd beliefs? Has he discovered the man from within himself? Has he liberated himself from the yoke of worldly tyrants indulging in the exploitation of man by man? If such a millenum has not been achieved despite all developments in science and technology, then Islam has still a great and glorious part to play.

Obtainable from the following Islamic Information Service Offices:
✉ 497, BLANTYRE, MALAWI – ✉ 1019, LILONGWE, MALAWI
✉ 790, KWE KWE ZIMBABWE – ✉ 65, BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE
✉ 7, BUTHA BUTHE, LESOTHO – ✉ 32531, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA
P/Bag 1543, MOLEPOLOLE, BOTSWANA – ✉ 1693, MANZINI, SWAZILAND – ✉ 22421, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Published by: **SOUTHERN AFRICA ISLAMIC YOUTH CONFERENCES**
✉ 48001, Qualbert 4078, Natal, South Africa
impress